Teacher Training in Austria in the Last Decade—The Development of and Challenges for an Inclusive School System

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This paper outlines the journey of reforming teacher training in Austria from special education to inclusive education in the light of recent political developments, international legislation, and recommendations. After a historical overview of special education teacher training, this study discusses the developments that had an impact on the current teacher training for inclusive education in Austria. On the basis of content analysis of relevant policy documents, regulations, reports, and statements, the paper analyzes the impact of the political changes in the country as well as of international movements on the curriculum, policies, and practices for teacher training for special needs education and inclusive education over the course of time. The text-based analysis revealed that while Austria has diligently followed international recommendations and agreements, it was nevertheless criticized for its failure to successfully implement already piloted practices on a large scale.

Keywords: inclusion, teacher training, Austria, policies, UN CRPD

INTRODUCTION

The Austrian political arena has gone through several changes in the last decade. These usually stemmed either from regular elections or from snap polls following the collapse of government and the resulting impact on the country. In the last ten years, Austrians were called to vote three times in federal parliament and three times in presidential elections. Consequently, four different governments – including different coalitions as well as five different ministers responsible for education, science, and research – governed the country in the last decade. When the state's effect on education is considered (Husted and Kenny, 2000), Austrian education agenda and its components have gone through change resulted from the impact of political changes at national and international level over the last decade especially in teacher training.

Several scholars (Siciliano et al., 2017; DeVoto, 2019; Luke, 2019) have dealt with the connection between political influencing factors and reforms of teacher training, or teachers' sense-making. DeVoto (2019) refers in his work to the quick history of American teacher training where he examined a selection of political instruments and waves of reform all of which are aimed at the teacher quality. Influence forces were the government losses of local to federal/state oversight. Furthermore, the external influence of NGOs could be seen. Those responsible and market-oriented political instruments crystallized as political paradoxes and stakeholders could not agree on how the paths to professionalization and its governance can be designed. Similarly, in Austria the frequent

political changes and the resulting political instability the country faced contributed to radical changes in several areas including curricula, the educational system, school system, university education, and teacher education. The most recent changes in this regard include launching a new school type, closing some special education schools and renaming these schools twice, changes in the school curriculum, the introduction of a nation-wide high school leaving exam, the possibility of eliminating grades in the first years of primary level and later, their reintroduction. While some of these changes were influenced by international developments and EU legislation, some of them reflect the political ideology of the four different coalition governments of the last decade. In this context, reference can be made to Woolley (2017), who takes the inclusive approach to involve all people in society, schools, and educational institutions for which constructive and supportive relationships are required. Woolley (2017) uses the term democracy in this context. This democratic contribution can, according to Woolley, be described as the way that political systems work in many parts of the world. Political systems can be viewed in two ways, namely the formal structures of government and, on the other hand, the value base that influences personal opinion and action. While the studies of Coburn (2005) and Vekeman et al. (2015) show how the personal opinion- and action-based policies have impact on teacher evaluation or teacher education policies, this study is an attend to examine the formal structures and their impact. Hence, if or how the political systems collaborate with social and educational structures and which influences of this collaboration or refrainment from coloration have on teacher training in Austria are in the scope of this study.

The present study aims to shed light on the question of the changes that teacher training for special needs education has undergone over the past decade. Relevant documents and developments are tackled with a historical perspective in order to examine how they shaped the current policies, practices, and regulations regarding teacher training for special needs education in Austria. The national and international developments as well as documents such as official statements, regulations, or recommendations of experts are analyzed through content analysis.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was carried out using qualitative content analysis according to Mayring (2002). Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use (Krippendorff, 2004). The document analysis strives to develop material that was not created by the researcher through data collection. It should be noted that document analysis is very broadly defined in this context. It is characterized by the diversity of the material and is used above all when it comes to historical events. As mentioned in the introduction, this research aimed to address the journey of reforming teacher training from special to inclusive education in Austria. Therefore, while document analysis as a form of a qualitative design appeared especially suitable for studying the changes in teacher training in Austria over a certain period of time, the qualitative content analysis according to Mayring (2002) was considered as an appropriate evaluation method.

According to Mayring (2002), there are three elementary types of qualitative content analysis.

1. Summary: The aim of the analysis is to reduce the material in such a way that the essential content is retained, in order to create a manageable body through abstraction, which is still an image of the primary material (Illustrated in **Figure 1**).
2. Explication: The aim of the analysis is to provide additional material for individual parts of the text in question, which extends the understanding and explains the text passage.
3. Structuring: The aim of the analysis is to filter certain aspects out of the material, to layout a cross-section through the material according to predetermined order criteria, or to assess the material based on certain criteria.

In this study, the first two types of analysis were applied. In the following, they are briefly presented, showing their aims, and then elaborated in the context of the study. The first type, summary, was used as a preparatory process to reduce the abundant material. The basic idea of this content analysis was to first standardize the unit level of the material and then gradually increase it. This type was implemented for the historical overview (see section "Findings") using the following materials:

- Publications from the Federal Ministry of Education, Research, and Science,
- reports and recommendations from experts (groups),
- descriptions of the current occupational fields,
- documents that reflect historical developments,
- official statements,
- curricula and study plans.

Figure 1 displays the process model of the summary qualitative content analyses according to Mayring (2002).

The design of a timeline with historical contextualization was defined as the desired level of abstraction. Initially, documents published by the government were examined. In this step, historical milestones were identified, or based on the texts, such information was bundled, which made the associated objectives possible. These milestones were defined as categories. After a timeline was created, the source material was re-checked and the milestones were summarized.

The second type of analysis applied was explication. The basic idea of explication is the definition, in advance, of exactly where to look for additional material in order to explain the text in question. According to Mayring (2002), two sources can be distinguished:

- the narrow text context, therefore, the direct text environment of the position requiring interpretation, and
- the wider text context beyond that scope.

Figure 2 displays the process model of the explicit qualitative content analyses according to Mayring (2002).

FIGURE 1 | Process model of the summary content analysis (Mayring, 2002).

FIGURE 2 | Process model of the explicit qualitative content analyses (Mayring, 2002).
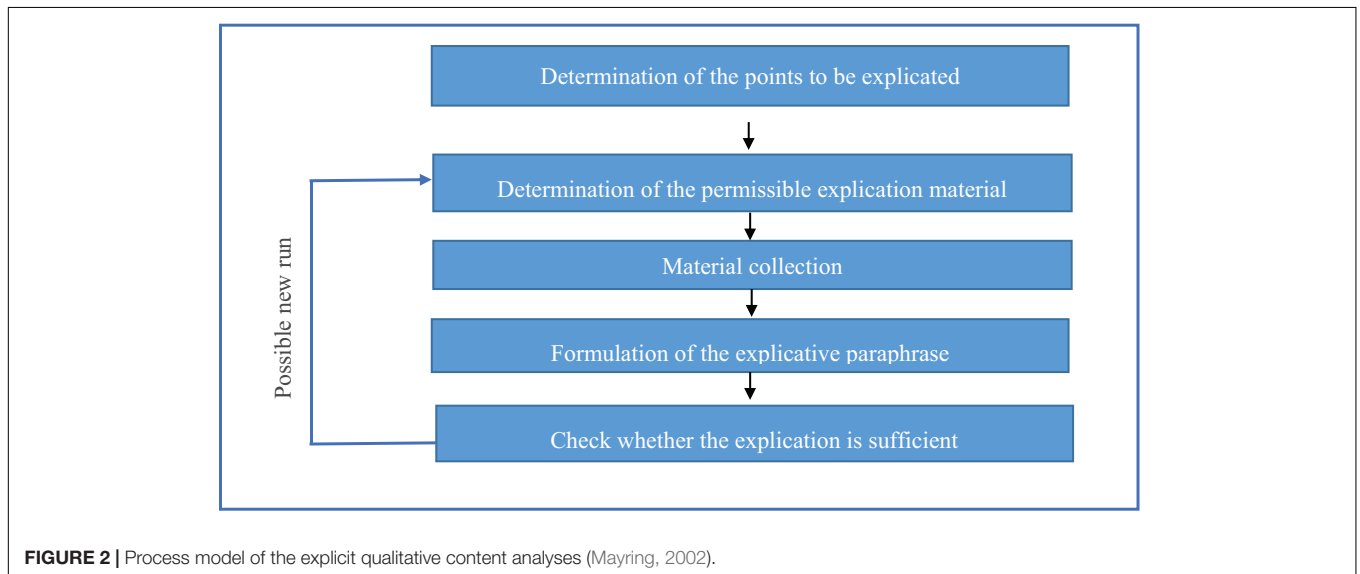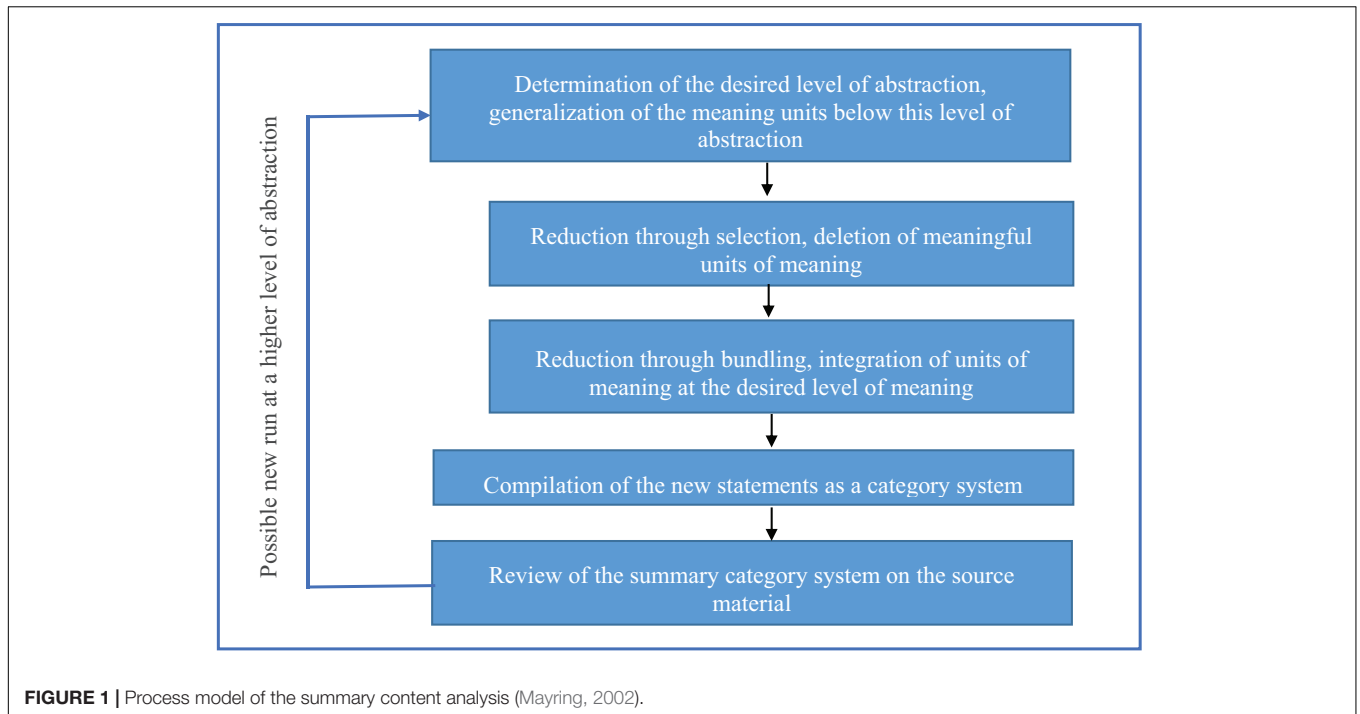
This type of qualitative content analysis was carried out after the creation of the schematic representation of the historical overview (see **Table 1**) and the summary of it since the representation in the documents raised questions that were further processed by this step. For example, milestones in history have been defined in the documents, but they describe the conditions for success unilaterally or not. For example, reference was made to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). How it was signed is not mentioned in this document and the associated consequences cannot be inferred from this document (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz [BMASK], 2012).

Additional material, which was used for this analysis, covered the following:

- Reports by the independent Monitoring Committee (Monitoringausschuss) on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD),
- references to publications on teacher training in Austria,
- official documents on the implementation of inclusive model regions in Austria.

The results of this analysis are integrated into the description of the historical overview (see section "Findings").

TABLE 1 | Historical overview as results of the preparation process of the summary.

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2018	2019	2020
The UN CRPD enters into force in Austria.		The Federal Government sticks to the implementation of the UN CRPD and decides to draw up a NAP.	The preparation of the NAP for People with Disabilities begins.	NAP for People with Disabilities is finalized.	As a result of the first CRPD state examination process, Austria receives 23 recommendations.		145 NAP disability measures already implemented.				NAP evaluation
				Publication of the NAP 2012–2020.							
				Establishment of an accompanying group to the NAP.							
The European Commission proposes extended anti-discrimination directives.	The EU joins the UN CRPD.	The European Commission presents the Communication "European Disability Strategy 2010–2020".	Report of the Preparatory Group is published.		Simultaneous legal amendments regarding colleges of education and universities.	The Federal Center for Inclusive Education and Special Education is commissioned to coordinate curriculum development.	A curricular working group formed of representatives of the University of Vienna and the three participating colleges of education.	Start of the bachelor's degree course on inclusive education (focus on impairment).	The UN requests Austria to implement the 23 UN recommendations.	Start of the master's degree course on inclusive education (focus on impairment.)	
			Development of recommendations.	Publication of the recommendations of the expert group.							

● Political decisions on the way to inclusion in Austria   ● International decisions on the way to inclusion   ● Development of Teacher Education NEW in Austria

FINDINGS

This part discusses the findings of the content analysis of the relevant documents in parallel to national and international developments that affected the country context. **Table 1** illustrates the steps in Austrian policy-making in regard to inclusion based on international developments. The first step of analysis "summary" tackles these developments with a historical perspective. The "explication," on the other hand, is highlighted in bold in each relevant paragraph.

The summary starts with the introduction of UN CRPD. Even though it preceded the last decade, the proposal by the European Commission regarding anti-discrimination legislation and UN CRPD significantly shaped the following developments in Austria. After a lull in the previous two decades, disability rights and the equal treatment of people regardless of their abilities became a part of the political agenda again in Austria thanks to UN CRPD.

Sixteen years after publishing the national disability policy and as a member state of the European Union, Austria became a part of the proposal to extend the EU anti-discrimination directives on 2 July 2008 (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz [BMASK], 2012). On that day, the European Commission submitted a proposal for a Council Directive on the application of the principle of equal treatment irrespective of religion or belief, sexual orientation, age or disability, which extended the anti-discrimination directive by going beyond previously afforded protection.

In October 2008, Austria ratified the UN CRPD. It was agreed that legislation, administration, and case law must respect the convention.

As Austria also ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention, persons with disabilities may file individual complaints with the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Geneva (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz [BMASK], 2012, 2015). In the step of the explication, the question arose whether this complaint option had ever been used persons with disabilities and their representatives in Austria. In this context, reference can be made to the independent Monitoring Committee on the implementation of the UN CRPD, which monitors public authorities' compliance with the human rights of persons with disabilities in the area of federal competence. This committee produces reports to the United Nations and the Federal Disability Advisory Board. The first report to the United Nations was published in September 2013 and was seen as preparation for the dialogue on Austria's first state report. In summary, the following problem areas were addressed at the time:

Four years after the ratification, it can be said that there was an increasing awareness about the changes that the convention required. However, the involvement of all necessary actors was not at the required level. It was visible that several key actors

to implement the convention and to take steps for change were not willing to take over this responsibility. The report showed that especially in social policy and education, the provisions were mainly individual or small-scale that could not achieve change. On the other hand, the report suggested that there were enough pilot projects, however, not enough adoption of change. There was a call for the highest maxim for action in all sociopolitical fields, and thus self-determination, inclusion, accessibility, and participation to implement as cross-sectional material. The final message of the report was that the ratification did not bring any visible change in the way policies are implemented (Monitoringausschuss, 2013).

In 2009, the EU ratified the UN CRPD (after ratification, the Convention entered into force for the EU on 23 January 2011), which made the CRPD the first international human rights treaty that was ratified by the European Union in addition to the individual ratification of 27 member states. As an EU member state, Austria has since then worked closely with the European Commission to implement the convention (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz [BMASK], 2012).

In line with the convention, it is important to ask which steps Austria has taken to finalize the reforms. On 5 October 2010, Austria announced its intention to draw up a national plan that would direct national disability policy. In the first Austrian state report to the United Nations concerning the implementation of the UN CRPD in Austria, the Federal Government declared that they were planning to publish a National Action Plan for People with Disabilities in Austria (NAP). The action plan was intended to include the guidelines of the Austrian disability policy and update the suggested necessary steps to be taken by 2020 (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz [BMASK], 2012). The Austrian NAP was not only compatible with the UN CRPD but also with the Communication by the European Commission that was presented shortly after the introduction of the idea for an Austrian national action plan for disability. As pointed out by the responsible ministry (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz [BMASK], 2012), the Communication entitled "European Disability Strategy 2010–2020: a renewed commitment to a barrier-free Europe" presented in November 2010 by the European Commission was largely in line with the priorities in the Austrian NAP.

The preparation of the NAP began in 2011 on the basis of contributions from all federal ministries under the auspices and coordination of the Ministry of Social Affairs. The NAP bundled – in the sense of disability mainstreaming – measures in the area of disability, whereby the individual departments had to exercise their responsibilities within the frame of the Ministry of Social Affairs (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz [BMASK], 2012). 2011 was also the year when recommendations for the action plan started to merge at the national level regarding the impact of the action plan on special needs education and teacher education. Some of the steps taken to boost the impact of UN CRPD in Austria should be examined in detailed. There was a participatory strategy to implement the UN CRPD. Therefore, dialogue rounds, conferences, and information and discussion events were held for

this purpose across the country (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz [BMASK], 2012). As part of the explication analysis step, the question arose as to the extent of participation of disabled people. In this context, reference can again be made to the report of the Monitoring Committee, which takes a critical position on this (Monitoringausschuss, 2013):

Whether the participatory strategy was adopted thoroughly was the next concern. In the course of implementing the convention, there is a lot of talk about participation, but little or no action has been taken. This problematic development was particularly evident in the context of the drafting of the National Action Plan. While the Minister for Social Affairs on July 23, 2012, emphasized that "... in addition to the involvement of all responsible ministries, great importance was attached to the participation of disability organizations" and thereby "... people involved were actively involved in the design of the NAP," the actual situation shows a different picture. Accordingly, the Monitoring Committee and numerous disability organizations in Austria stated in their comments on the draft that it was not written in cooperation, but only in the sense of information. It is worrying that democratically relevant concepts such as participation are used to make politics, but the convention is not followed in any way.

In parallel, if academics were engaged in these developments should be tackled to understand the attitude towards collaboration with educational scientists. In a conference in May 2011, experts worked together to develop recommendations for the transition to move from special schools towards more inclusive schools and to inclusive teacher education. The project "Teacher Education for Inclusion" was introduced at this conference (PädagogInnenbildung NEU, 2012). The Preparatory Group for the Implementation of Pedagogical Training was formed to rethink the education of pedagogical professionals in order to teach in a more inclusive way (Feyerer, 2015; Biewer, 2016). Based on the first report of this group, the Federal Ministry of Education commissioned the Teacher Education College in Upper Austria to develop recommendations for the contemporary education of all educators and to coordinate nationwide and institution-wide collaboration between the colleges of education and universities. The aim was to draw up guidelines, the structure and scope of inclusion, and content for the new study programs. In autumn the same year, a coordination group was formed, which produced a discussion paper for a nationwide workshop with experts from teacher education colleges, universities, and schools. The agenda of the coordination group included the career options for inclusive education teachers (Feyerer, 2015), the position paper of the Ministry on "special education and integration pedagogy" (Feyerer et al., 2008), the recommendations of the Conference of Rectors of Teacher Training Universities in Switzerland (COHEP, 2008), and two articles on Special Education for Teachers in Inclusive School Systems (Feyerer, 2015).

What changes the engagement and collaboration of academics from educational context brought to practice is next to discuss. The career options of inclusive education teachers can be considered as a replacement and extension of the previous

training of special needs teachers. The completion of the previous program entitled graduates to teach in general special schools or special schools for specific needs, such as a special school for the hearing impaired, special school for visually impaired children, special school for disabled children, etc. (Feyerer et al., 2008; Arbeitsmarkt Service AMS, 2018).

Another employment possibility for special education teachers was teaching in integration classes located in general schools. Here, the lessons took place in regular school classes in which a group of pupils with special needs were integrated. This meant that two teachers, one with special education training and one teacher with regular elementary school teacher training, were responsible for the lessons. Teachers were equal partners and responsible for all children, even though the teacher with special education training was mainly responsible for special needs education, but did not lose sight of the commonality of teaching. The joint work included the preparation, planning, and implementation of the lessons, but also parent-school collaboration and cooperation with all relevant institutions and authorities.

Another employment option concerns special education centers. These are implemented in the context of the legal anchoring of integrative education as a competence and resource center to ensure a successful implementation of integrative education. In addition to the support of the local teaching staff, special education centers, which are called inclusive education and special education centers, also have the task of advising parents and informing them about the educational possibilities of the pupils. The most important tasks include the preparation of reports and helping to develop individual development plans (Feyerer et al., 2008; Arbeitsmarkt Service AMS, 2018).

Another possibility after completing the special school teacher training course was as a support teacher in primary schools or in lower secondary schools with individual children who had special educational needs. In addition, to support teachers who accompany children with learning difficulties, different outpatient systems have developed in the individual federal states, e.g., outpatient speech therapy teachers, outpatient teachers for pupils with visual impairment, counseling teachers for children with so-called difficult behavior (Feyerer et al., 2008). These occupational fields are still part of the job description of special education teachers or inclusive education teachers (Arbeitsmarkt Service AMS, 2018).

At the same time, we should also elaborate on how academic arena was engaged in shaping the knowledge body about the developments and changes regarding teacher training and/or school practices. The steps taken at the national policy level were also visible in the academic educational agenda in the country. Several conferences and symposia were held among higher education institutions to shape the policy for inclusive teacher training. A common understanding of inclusive pedagogy and the structural anchoring of it in pedagogical education were published as recommendations by the expert group in 2012 (PädagogInnenbildung NEU, 2012; Feyerer, 2015). This common understanding is defined as follows:

Inclusive pedagogy means theories about education, upbringing, and development that labels and classifications reject their exit from the rights more vulnerable and marginalized people, for their participation in all areas of life plead and aim for a structural change of the regular institutions in order to meet the requirements and needs of all users (Biewer, 2017a).

The following key points were identified in the recommendations of the expert group for the implementation of an inclusive education system (PädagogInnenbildung NEU, 2012):

- 3-phase training with at least 5.5 years of training for everyone,
- no longer school-related training, but age-related courses (0–12 and 8–19),
- uniform study architecture for all teachers,
- common requirements for all institutions:

  - tertiary educational institution or independent part of it with teaching, research, development, and orientation towards the practice of pedagogical professions,
  - accredited offers for all phases and both age ranges,
  - degrees at all academic levels (BA, MA, Ph.D.),
  - academic and professional staff,
  - at least 25% of all work units must be used for research and development,
  - institutionalized practice contacts and integration into relevant scientific communities,
  - autonomy and co-determination for tertiary educational institutions.

As part of the explication analysis step, the question arose as to the definition of inclusive pedagogy. Inclusive pedagogy was seen as a teaching principle, but also as a research area that unites, transfers, and develops knowledge of the previous areas of special education such as integration education, intercultural pedagogy, gender-equitable pedagogy, the promotion of highly gifted people, and securing heterogeneity into one inclusive education system (Feyerer, 2015).

Following an appraisal of the first draft of the NAP at the beginning of 2012, the Ministry of Social Affairs, in collaboration with all relevant ministries, finalized the final draft (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz [BMASK], 2012). The national action plan was introduced as:

A strategically designed action plan spanning several years that creates the conditions for political participation, transparency, predictability, verifiability, and further development and is therefore in the interests of people with disabilities.

As mentioned before, the strategy of acting in the interests of people with disabilities seemed to be realized by informing them, but not in a participatory way. Although not in a participatory way, what NAP strategy wanted to achieve can tell a lot about the country context.

This mission statement, on the other hand, implies several targeted achievements regarding the lives of people with disabilities. On 24 July 2012, the NAP 2012–2020 was published as a strategy of the Austrian Federal Government to implement

the UN CRPD. In this strategy, inclusion was introduced as a human right and mission. The document included national objectives and 250 measures with corresponding timelines and responsibilities (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz [BMASK], 2012).

This document specified the first steps in the direction of inclusive education. The NAP introduced so-called "inclusive regions" that were intended to be a way of implementing an inclusive school system in practice. So the federal government, the federal states, and the municipalities were to try out model regions and offer and expand them over time. After that, an accompanying group on the NAP was set up with the involvement of disability organizations (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz [BMASK], 2012).

How the Austrian NAP developments were evaluated by the Committee is the next point to tackle. The UN Committee on the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities held its first official "Dialog" (state examination) at the United Nations in Geneva on 2 and 3 September 2013. On the basis of the 2010 country report presented by Austrian experts from the federal ministries and agencies of the federal state governments, as well as the results of the first state examination, the committee published concluding remarks about Austria on 30 September 2013. As a result of the first CRPD state examination process, Austria received 23 recommendations from the CRPD Committee in the form of "concluding remarks" (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz [BMASK], 2015).

These included the following recommendations, which were related to education and teacher training (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz [BMASK], 2015):

7. Implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child as soon as possible.
18. Greater efforts to support pupils with disabilities in all areas of inclusive education from kindergarten to secondary school:

   ○ Involvement of people with disabilities, including children with disabilities, and the organizations representing them in the day-to-day implementation of inclusive education models,
   ○ facilitating studies for people with disabilities at universities and other institutions in the tertiary education sector,
   ○ and training teachers with disabilities and sign language-proficient teaching staff at a high-quality level.

The actions of Austria based on these recommendations should be discussed in the frame of explication. Starting in 2013, the reforms in inclusive education and inclusive teacher education were accelerated. In the same year, a simultaneous amendment to the Higher Education Act (for teacher education colleges) and the University Act (for universities), which was intended to create the legal basis for the implementation of teacher education, took place (Feyerer, 2015; Biewer, 2016). Subsequently, in January 2014, the Federal Center for Inclusive Education and Special Education at the Teacher Education College in Upper Austria was commissioned to coordinate the

curriculum development in the field of inclusive education across Austria and in an inter-institutional collaboration.

As the first step, recommendations for the study structure were developed at an Austria-wide expert conference in January 2014 with approximately 50 representatives of all teacher education colleges and some universities (PädagogInnenbildung NEU, 2014). In the fall of 2015, a curricular working group was formed from representatives of the University of Vienna and the three participating colleges of higher education, which prepared a curriculum and submitted it to the decision-making committees (Biewer, 2016). In the fall of 2016, the bachelor program Inclusive Education (with a focus on impairment) at the University of Vienna was launched in cooperation with the three teacher education colleges. The special feature of this bachelor program is that teachers are now no longer trained according to school types (training for junior high school or secondary school had taken place at a college of education and the training for teachers for the lower grades of a higher general secondary school had taken place at the university), but for the age range of 10–18 years (StudienServiceCenter der LehrerInnenbildung, 2016).

In 2015, the NAP interim report was published. This report showed that 145 of the 250 measures suggested by this action plan had already been implemented or were being implemented as planned (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz [BMASK], 2015). By 2015, Austria had achieved more than half of the measures of the national action plan. However, Austria received further recommendations. The UN requested Austria to implement the 23 UN recommendations by the next State Report which had been expected for 2018 and should be finished in 2020 (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz [BMASK], 2015). In accordance with the recommendations, which steps were taken? **Table 2** displays the UN recommendations and the steps taken by Austria in order to comply.

On 12 October 2018, the UN Disability Rights Committee submitted a list of issues with 45 questions to Austria, which had to be answered by 1 October 2019. The answers were created from the contributions of all federal ministries and all federal states as well as the combined second and third state report of Austria (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz [BMASK], 2019). However, the latter is a draft that lists questions and answers and not the actual state report.

In the context of the analysis step of the explication, the questions arose as to which developments have taken place after the first state report. Therefore, the report by the Monitoring Committee was used again, which describes the following recommendations in 2018 (Monitoringausschuss, 2018):

Through revision and resharpening of the current NAP disability and by taking into account the following parameters:

- Comprehensive and serious participation of people with disabilities in the revision and evaluation,
- clearer orientation to the individual requirements of the CRPD taking into account the maxim of the social model

TABLE 2 | UN recommendations and steps taken by Austria.

Recommendations of the UN CRPD Committee to Austria in September 2013	Steps taken by Austria by the end of 2015
7. Implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child as soon as possible.	● In this context, reference is made to point 3 (de-institutionalization) and point 18 (inclusive education) of the recommendations.
18. Greater efforts to support pupils with disabilities in all areas of inclusive education from kindergarten to secondary school:	● A concept for model regions for inclusive education was developed. This program was launched in three federal states in September 2015.
○ Involvement of people with disabilities, including children with disabilities, and the organizations representing them in the day-to-day implementation of inclusive education models,	● In addition, in the 2013/2014 school year, around 60% of schoolchildren in Austria who had special educational needs were taught in inclusive settings.
○ facilitating studies for people with disabilities at universities and other institutions in the tertiary education sector, ○ and training of teachers with disabilities and sign language proficient teaching staff at a high-quality level.	● Support for students with disabilities, e.g., disability officers are already institutionally established at almost all universities and some universities of applied sciences and are continuously financed: GESTU in Vienna, Center for Integrated Studies in Graz and in Linz.

of disability and the self-determination of people with disabilities,

● sustainable involvement of the federal states in the revision with the distribution of clear responsibilities and roles,
● central, continuous and effective coordination of the refurbishment process,
● introduction of indicators for the measurability and traceability of (partial) successes in the implementation of the NAP measures and their goals,
● adequate budgeting of the individual measures,
● independent evaluation according to recognized scientific methods.

Regarding inclusion in schools, a backward trend in the area of school inclusion was detected, as well as no movement in the area of institutional dismantling.

In 2016, the reforms in teacher education went beyond the implementation of the bachelor level degree for inclusive education at higher education institutions. It introduced new practices. What is special about the content is that on the one hand, there are basic fields of action such as linguistic and sensory development, emotional and social development, cognitive and motor development, and in-depth fields of action where students can delve into one of the basic fields of action. As a further specialization, sign language pedagogy with appropriate language prerequisites is offered (StudienServiceCenter der

LehrerInnenbildung, 2016). With this specialization, point 13 of the recommendations of the UN CRPD Committee was implemented, namely the training of sign language teachers at a high-quality level. A master's program with a focus on disability was launched in 2019 and has begun preparations to accept students. In the master's program, the specializations are carried out in the form of optional modules. One can choose among support systems for linguistic, sensory, cognitive, and motor development, emotional and social development, sign language pedagogy, and team and school development.

The evaluation of the NAP is under preparation by the University of Vienna Department of Special Education and Inclusive Education. The evaluation is expected to be published in late 2020.

DISCUSSION

In this article, the development of and challenges for an inclusive school system in Austria were discussed on the basis of a qualitative content analysis according to Mayring (2002). The study demonstrated tensions between teacher training and the professional field in which aspiring pedagogues are active. The professional field includes both segregating as well as integrative school settings. Inclusive settings, which are characterized by the way the diversity of students is regarded as the norm and taken into account in the school settings, are still rarely encountered. This tension goes to the detriment of the students in the professional field and it remains to be seen how this develops in the school system. Although model regions were implemented, the Monitoring Committee (Monitoringausschuss, 2013) pointed out that while pilot tests are important and necessary, they had been going on for a long time. The recommendations of people with disabilities, their representatives, and experts call for large-scale implementation. It can be argued that as there have already been sufficient pilot projects in this regard, the actors and practitioners know how to implement it. Now is the time to switch from pilot projects to "autopilot" in the sense that the implementation of human rights does not have to be "tested," but must be the highest maxim for action in all sociopolitical fields, and thus self-determination, inclusion, accessibility, and participation to implement as cross-sectional material are implemented. The implementation of the National Action Plan points to a public attempt to enable inclusion, whereby the presentation so far has left it open as to how the next few years will go and whether the current government will stop trying or actually take steps towards an inclusive education system. When the program of the current governing coalition is examined, this remains questionable (Die neue Volkspartei und die Grünen – die Grüne Alternative, 2020).

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Based on UNESCO's initial statement in 1994, inclusive schools have been considered as the most effective way to eliminate discriminatory approaches and attitudes towards students with

disabilities and other disadvantages. The legislation, policies and research in recent decades have evolved to challenge the exclusionary practices. The focus has been shifted to provide all learners with equal opportunities to learn and to achieve. Inclusion should be understood as a changing paradigm that requires teachers who can support students both academically and socially. In many parts of the world, there have been efforts to change teacher training and preparation to respond to the needs of inclusive education. However, the change has been rather slow and many teachers are not well prepared for managing inclusive classrooms and understanding differences among students. Inadequate teacher training often curbs teachers from developing the appropriate beliefs or attitudes necessary for becoming inclusive practitioners. Many pre-service teachers report that they need more professional help than they currently receive, which also points to the lack of national efforts to achieve the required change. Hence, it is crucial to take a closer look at the national steps taken and which national and international developments affect teacher education for inclusive education.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Both authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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